

The Salt Lake Tribune

Op-ed: We tried to tell you about Snake Valley water

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We sincerely appreciate The Salt Lake Tribune's coverage of proposed groundwater pumping in Spring and Snake Valleys in eastern Nevada and western Utah. The recent editorial ("The water in Snake Valley should stay in Snake Valley," Sept. 25) and Sept. 23 article are excellent examples of this.

We also welcome reports by the U.S. Geological Survey and Utah Geological Survey upon which the Sept. 23 article draws. Notably, both studies illustrate the sensitivity of Snake Valley to excess pumping. Much of the water in Snake Valley is ancient, meaning extracting it from the ground may be equivalent to mining a valuable resource. In fact, much of the data in the Utah Geological Survey report originated in our labs at BYU.

However, we wish to remind the Tribune and inform its readers that this news is not "new." In 2012 we published an article on the groundwater systems in Spring and Snake Valleys in an international publication, *Hydrogeology Journal* (v. 20, p. 1133-1145). In fact, this article was an editor's choice publication for 2012. In August of this year we published a follow-up article in the same journal. We reached the same conclusions about the dangers of pumping Snake Valley water at least two years ago.

We have shared our work with a Tribune environmental reporter, Michael Styler (Executive Director of the Utah Department of Natural Resources), and the Nevada State engineer. None has seemed particularly interested in this work. Perhaps there is an element of wounded pride on our part that prompts us to write. However, we are puzzled that policymakers and news outlets have been so disinterested in directly relevant peer-reviewed science published in an international journal. More important to the citizens of Utah, this information has been available for a considerable period of time to help shape the debate and policy decisions surrounding this important topic.

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